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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000537

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SUBJECT: LEBANON: JUMBLATT SAYS HE RECEIVED "ENOUGH" FUNDS  
FROM SAUDI ARABIA

REF: BEIRUT 500

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) March 14 Druze leader Walid Jumblatt told the Ambassador that he and Sunni leader Saad Hariri had "very good" meetings with Saudi King Abdullah, Prince Mukrin, and other Saudi officials during a brief visit to the Kingdom May 9-10. Jumblatt said the Saudis had recently given cash injections to several March 14 leaders, including himself. Without specifying the dollar amounts, he said the funds were "enough." He hoped March 14 would use some of their resources to improve campaign ads to compete with Christian opposition leader Michel Aoun's campaign. Jumblatt said several March 14 rallies were planned in Sunni and Druze districts to draw additional voters, but it was unlikely the same would happen in the Christian districts. March 14's Christians, he said, were still squabbling among themselves about their candidates for the June 7 parliamentary elections. End summary.

JUMBLATT, HARIRI GO TO THE KINGDOM  
WITH CUP IN HAND

2. (C) March 14 Druze leader Walid Jumblatt confirmed to the Ambassador and Poloff May 12 that he and Sunni leader Saad Hariri met with Saudi King Abdullah May 9 in Riyadh. In their "brief, but efficient" meeting with the King, Jumblatt reported they discussed March 14's prospects for winning the June 7 Lebanese parliamentary elections and the ongoing legal dispute between Lebanese Christian leader Samir Geagea and LBC television's Pierre Daher. If March 14 did not win a majority in the elections, Jumblatt said "only the Saudi King" could convince Hariri not to accept an offer to become Prime Minister in a national unity government. King Abdullah, he said, urged March 14 to "accept" the release of the four suspected generals (reftel) in the investigation of the assassination former PM Rafiq Hariri.

3. (C) At a dinner later the same day, Jumblatt and Hariri were hosted by Saudi Prince Mukrin. Prince Abdullah bin Abdelaziz, Saudi Culture Minister and former Ambassador to

Lebanon Abdelaziz Khoja, and the new Saudi Ambassador to Lebanon Ali Al Osseiri (yet to officially take up his duties) also attended. (Note: We are told by our Lebanese interlocutors that Mukrin and Khoja, traditionally, have the most influence on Saudi's purse-strings for Lebanon. Osseiri has not yet completed his tour in Pakistan we understand. End note.)

14. (C) According to Jumblatt, "everyone has (financial) resources now." He confirmed that he, Hariri, March 14 Christian ally Michel Mouawad (Zgharta) and independent Mansur Ilbon Keserwan among others, had received Saudi cash infusions recently. However, in his estimation, Mouawad and Ilbon were not spending their money wisely. He also was critical of Hariri's spendthrift ways and chastised Hariri for "spoiling" his supporters by paying them early on, and now some are shifting their support to opposition leader Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) and Hizballah because Hariri is allegedly "not paying enough." On the contrary, March 14 Christian leader Amine Gemayel was a "miser," Jumblatt accused, and blamed Gemayel's past similar behavior as the reason March 14 lost the Metn by-election after the assassination of his son, popular politician Pierre Gemayel.

15. (C) Jumblatt also accused Geagea of "being too pushy" with television network LBC. "We need LBC...in the last two weeks all you see are opposition faces on TV," Jumblatt complained. He credited the opposition's expansive -- but expensive -- media campaign (including television, billboards, and posters) for appealing to voters in Arabic, French and English. March 14's campaign ads, he said, were "boring" by

BEIRUT 00000537 002 OF 002

comparison. Jumblatt hoped to improve March 14's ads with the additional Saudi resources.

MARCH 14'S SUNNI AND DRUZE UNITED,  
STILL WAITING FOR THE CHRISTIANS  
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16. (C) Jumblatt informed the Ambassador that he and Hariri are planning to hold an election rally in Jumblatt's Chouf district on May 31 to win over Sunni voters there. A similar rally, he said, is also being discussed for the West Bekaa region and would likely be scheduled on May 24. In the Bekaa, Jumblatt and Hariri worried that March 14 was losing voters to opposition candidates, especially for the Greek Orthodox seat in West Bekaa-Rachaya, currently held by MP Antoine Saad. Other rallies should be held in the Christian areas, Jumblatt said, but was not optimistic that it would be possible because of ongoing disputes over Christian candidates between March 14 leaders Geagea and Gemayel. The district that has become the most problematic is the Armenian seat in Beirut I district because of Geagea's refusal to accept anyone other than Richard Koumjian.

17. (C) Jumblatt did not believe March 14 would win any of the four seats in the key Christian district of Keserwan and was skeptical that the coalition could win two to three seats in the Metn district, another battleground. He blamed Metn political powerhouse Michel Murr for being "too greedy" and pushing independent Christian Nassib Lahoud to withdraw from the parliamentary race altogether. He called former Christian advisor to Hariri, Ghattas Khoury, and March 14 member Dory Chamoun's campaign to eliminate Geagea's candidate, George Adwan, from the Chouf district a "bad joint venture."

18. (C) Jumblatt reported he had urged Hariri to repair his relationship with opposition Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri. He sensed that in mixed Muslim-Christian districts, such as Jezzine, where the opposition had its own competing candidate lists, Hariri and Berri could both benefit from improved relations. If not, Jumblatt said, the Shiite vote would be in favor of Aoun.

